



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

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DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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Office of the Commissioner

October 8, 2025

The Honorable Marise C. James, Esq.
Chair, Committee on Disaster Recovery
Infrastructure and Planning
36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands

RE: DEPARTMENT UPDATE ON THE COMPREHENSIVE LAND & WATER USE PLAN

Good day Senator James, Chair of the 36th Legislature's Committee on Disaster Recovery, Infrastructure and Planning, other committee members, non-committee members and legislative staff present, and members of the viewing and listening public, my name is Jean-Pierre L. Oriol, Commissioner for the Department of Planning & Natural Resources (DPNR), and I have with me Mrs. Leia LaPlace-Matthew, Territorial Planner. We are present today to provide an update on the Comprehensive Land and Use Plan (Comp Plan) as requested by the Chair's invitation dated September 23, 2025. This update will include:

- Progress made to date
- Current or anticipated challenges
- Any projected timelines for next steps in the implementation process

When we were last present before this Body on May 29, 2025, we indicated that our immediate focus would be on addressing amendments to the VI Code which would bring our processes more in line with the Comp Plan. We also stated that we would be concentrating efforts on funding sources which would assist with the implementation. Since our last meeting four months ago, we have finalized two contracts for professional services to review and update Code amendments to Title 29, Chapter 3 (the Zoning Code) and Title 12, Chapter 21 (the VI CZM Act). We are estimating that some of these amendments will be shared for public comment in the January 2026 timeframe.

Collaboration with other agencies and entities on planning initiatives has also been active in the last few months. We have participated in the Department of Public Works kickoff meeting for the 2050 Transportation Master Plan, the WAPA-water STT/STJ Master Plan - Stakeholder Workshop, and met with the V.I. Housing Finance Authority's consultants on an Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI). One of the components of this analysis is to understand the current zoning code and its impact on affordable housing development; We will be participating in the Virgin Islands Port Authority's Frederiksted Waterfront Master Planning kickoff meeting; and are working with Master level students of the University of Pennsylvania on a Masters-level studio architecture course where this year's focus is on St Thomas and land use planning; we have worked with the Office of the Governor and the Office of Disaster Recovery on specific zoning updates (specifically those for the P-Public designation and creating a category for "Micro-brewery and Micro-distillery") to ease consistency requirements and drive economic activity, respectively. It is our understanding

that the proposed measure for the small-scale distilleries was transmitted on October 1, 2025 by the Office of the Governor for consideration, and the measure for the P designation will be transmitted shortly. Within the Department, we have identified several parcels of land to pursue for inclusion in the Territorial Parks System. In August, DPNR closed on 2400 acres of land in Annaly Bay, St. Croix commonly known as "Maroon Ridge" and we will shortly be closing on another 150 acres in Perseverance Bay, St. Thomas. Over the next six months several other property purchases will take place as we grow the Territorial Park System.

When we presented our last update, we stated that an early focus would be on securing funding, and our team has been working on a proposal for the implementation of the Comp Plan. We are also in the final stages of contracting professional services for an Implementation Coordinator, who as part of their scope will be responsible for the development of future funding proposals that will assist in the implementation.

Although it has only been less than a year since the passage of the Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan, the department remains steadfast in pushing forward the goals established within it.

This concludes my testimony on the current status of the Comprehensive Land and Water Use Plan. Leia and I are here to answer any questions you may have to the best of our abilities.